

Visually Assessing a Home for Lead Paint Hazards



Homes built before 1978 may contain lead paint.

Homes built before 1950 most likely contain lead paint. Homes built between 1950 and 1978 may contain lead. Much lower levels of lead were used in lead paint after 1950. Lead paint was banned from residential use in 1978. Doing a visual assessment will help determine if there are potential lead exposure hazards. Just because there is lead paint in a home doesn't mean there is a hazard. The condition or location of the paint is what puts a child at risk of lead exposure.

Where should I look for lead paint?

When you are doing a visual assessment for lead hazards, it is important to know where lead paint was typically used. Lead paint was expensive and durable. It was used most on:

- Woodwork and trim
- Floors
- Exteriors (including porches)
- Walls in bathrooms and kitchens



Lead paint wasn't often used on walls other than in kitchens and bathrooms. It wasn't often used on ceilings unless they are made of tin or wood (such as porch ceilings). Varnishes don't usually contain lead or significant levels of lead. A technique called "graining" (which looks like varnish) does include a thin layer of lead paint.

How often should I do a visual assessment?

The condition of paint changes over time. It is important to do re-assessments frequently, at least every 6 months.

What do I look for?

Use these questions to assess the painted surfaces:

1. Is the paint chipping, peeling, flaking or chalking?
 - If you wipe your hand across the surface, will it leave a residue of dust and/or chips on your hand?
 - Are the chips falling to the ground/floor where a child could reach them or where they could be tracked through the home?
2. Is the paint on a friction or impact surface?
 - Is the paint being rubbed bare on window sashes, doors or floors?
3. Is the paint on a surface that a child may chew on?
 - Is the surface horizontal, stick out enough for a child to mouth (1/2 inch or more), and within a child's reach (4 feet high or less)? Think about window sills, chair rails and baseboards.
4. Is there bare soil on the property?
 - Is the bare soil near your home, garage or other older structure?
 - Is there bare soil in the children's play area?
 - Is the garden located near your home, garage or other older structure?

If the answer is "yes" to any of the questions, then a lead exposure hazard may exist and should be corrected.

How can I keep the paint in good condition?

Using lead-safe maintenance practices can be used to reduce lead hazards and help keep paint in good condition. For more information on lead-safe maintenance practices, call the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 800-897-LEAD.



Division of Public Health Services, NH Department of Health & Human Services

800-897-LEAD



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